

CONFIDENTIAL DAMASCUS 000679

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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/ELA
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MCDERMOTT
PARIS FOR WALLER
LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2018
TAGS: **PTER PREL ASEC SY**
SUBJECT: CAR BOMB EXPLODES IN GREATER DAMASCUS AREA -
REGIME ELEMENTS LIKELY TARGETED

Classified By: CDA Maura Connelly for reasons 1.5 b and d.

11. (C) On September 27 at roughly 0745 Damascus time (0045 EST) a car bomb exploded on the main road connecting Damascus to surrounding suburbs and the Damascus International Airport, located approximately 5kms (3 miles) from the Embassy. Syrian and Western press have reported 17 deaths and 14 injuries associated with this blast. Post cannot confirm the reported tally at this time, nor can we confirm reports suggesting 200kgs (440 pounds) of explosives were used in the attack. ARSO observed a heavily guarded blast site, located near offices of the Palestine Branch and the Patrols Branch of the Syrian Military Intelligence (SMI), suggesting Syrian intelligence services may have been the intended targeted of the attack.

12. (C) All American Embassy personnel and their families have been accounted for at this time. A list of the dead and injured, along with associated nationalities, has yet to be released. Post convened an EAC meeting this morning (cable to follow) and will continue to monitor developments as they unfold.

13. (C) Comment: The SARG has not seen such a direct, large-scale attack on its personnel and facilities since the uprising of the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1980s and we are therefore likely to see a robust security service response in the coming days. Given the strained bilateral relations between the U.S. and the SARG, accurate details on the nature of the attack, potential follow-on attacks and the SARG's response, are likely to remain elusive. End Comment. CONNELLY